

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5701

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT OF SPAIN 1306

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, TD

SUBJECT: PNM LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION

REF: POS 1260

SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH THE SUCCESSOR TO PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS APPEARS LIKELY TO BE HUDSON PHILLIPS, HE FACES A TOUGH FIGHT AND PROBABLY SEVERE DAMAGE TO HIS PARTY AND GREATER RACIAL POLARIZATION OF POLITICS. OPPOSITION ELEMENTS ARE BECOMING MORE ACTIVE. END SUMMARY.

1. IN THE TWO AND ONE HALF WEEKS SINCE PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS ANNOUNCED HE WOULD LEAVE PUBLIC LIFE, POLITICAL THINKING HAS STARTED TO ADJUST TO THE NEW SITUATION.

2. INITIAL PNM HOPES THAT WILLIAMS WAS BLUFFING OR COULD BE PERSUADED TO REVERSE HIMSELF HAVE SUBSIDED, PARTLY AS A RESULT OF PM'S ADAMANCE AND PARTLY DUE TO ABSENCE OF SERIOUS UPSURGE OF PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR HIM. (SUCH SUPPORT AS HAS MANIFESTED ITSELF IS IMPLICITLY IN TERMS OF AVOIDING DIVISIVE SCRAMBLE FOR POWER RATHER THAN ENDORSEMENT OF RECENT YEARS OF WILLIAMS'

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REIGN). WE TEND TO THINK HE HAS CROSSED THE RUBICON THIS

TIME DESPITE RECURRENT SUGGESTIONS THAT HE MIGHT STAY ON A BIT LONGER IN MOVE TO BLOCK HUDSON-PHILLIPS AND/OR GET CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION SETTLED.

3. DESPITE BOOMLETS FOR DEMAS, JOSEPH, CHAMBERS, MAHABIR AND PREVATT (THE LAST TWO HAVE SPECIFICALLY REMOVED THEMSELVES FROM CONSIDERATION), THE PNM APPEARS TO HAVE TWO SERIOUS CONTENDERS FOR PARTY LEADER (AND HENCE PRIME MINISTER): HUDSON-PHILLIPS AND MOHAMMED. THEY ARE THE ONLY POTENTIAL LEADERS KNOWN TO HAVE SUBMITTED THE LETTERS OF CONSENT REQUIRED FOR NOMINATION. WHETHER HUDSON-PHILLIPS CAN MAKE A DEAL FOR SUPPORT BY MOHAMMED, THE WEAKER CANDIDATE, OR WHETHER MOHAMMED WILL LEAVE THE PARTY (PERHAPS TAKING MANY EAST INDIANS WITH HIM) ARE SUBJECTS OF INTENSE BUT SO FAR INDETERMINATE SPECULATION.

4. FOR HUDSON-PHILLIPS TO WIN AND HAVING WON TO KEEP THE PNM (MINISTERS, MPS, AND PARTY STRUCTURE) BEHIND HIM WILL REQUIRE SKILL, FOR HE FACES VARYING DEGREES OF OPPOSITION FROM WILLIAMS, MAHABIR, PREVATT, KAMAL, AND THE PARTY'S SECRETARY GENERAL AND, OUTSIDE THE PARTY, THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL AND CHIEF JUSTICE. INDEED MANY, INCLUDING GOVERNOR GENERAL (POS 1234), PROFESS TO FORESEE THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE PNM. PREVAILING SPECULATION SEEMS INCREASINGLY TO HOLD THAT HUDSON-PHILLIPS (OR OTHER PNM LEADER) WILL NOT CALL ELECTIONS IN EARLY 1974 AS PREVIOUSLY FORESEEN AND MAY SEEK TO SERVE OUT LARGE PART OR EVEN ALL OF PERIOD BEFORE REQUIRED ELECTIONS IN 1976.

5. DOMINATING ALL COMMENT, HOWEVER, IS CONCERN THAT RACIAL POLITICS IS BECOMING MORE OPEN, WITH POLARIZATION BETWEEN NEGRO AND EAST INDIAN ELEMENTS. IF THIS CONTINUES THE FORMER WOULD MOSTLY HEAD TOWARD HUDSON-PHILLIPS, WHILE THE LATTER WOULD AT THIS

POINT BE SCATTERED AMONG THE STILL-SPLIT DLP AND THD DAC. MEANWHILE SEVERAL EAST INDIAN "KINGMAKERS" ARE URGING ASHFORD SINANAN (CURRENTLY T&T PERMREP IN GENEVA) TO RETURN TO LEAD A NEW INDIAN PARTY.

6. THE SOMEWHAT BAFFLED OPPOSITION ELEMENTS HAVE HAD DIFFICULTY IN REACTING TO SUCH A FLUID SITUATION. ANR ROBINSON'S DAC HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY ACTIVE; THE TRADITIONAL INDIAN PARTY, CONFIDENTIAL

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THE DLP, MAY BE MOVING TO HWEL# ITS SPLIT; THE DARLING OF THE UNIVERSITY INTELLECTUALS, LLOYD BEST, HAS ANNOUNCED THAT HIS TAPIA GROUP ARE AT LAST READY TO ENTER THE POLITICAL FRAY; THE NJAC (BLACK POWER) HAS NOT MODIFIED ITS EARLIER INTENTION TO BOYCOTT THE ELECTORAL PROCESS; MILLETTE'S SMALL UNIP IS RIDING CUBA'S COATTAILS; WHILE NOTHING MUCH HAS BEEN HEARD FROM NUFF AND THE FUERILLAS LATELY.

7. ALL SHOULD BECOME CLEARER BY NOVEMBER 15, THE
DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF NOMINATIONS FOR PNM POLITICAL
LEADER.
MARSHALL

NOTE BY OCT: #AS RECEIVED.

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